

Harold Weisberg

The unending hatred

By any rational standard, journalistic or common sense, the local papers have devoted an extraordinarily disproportionate amount of space to the terrible situation in the Middle East in a long and apparently endless series of columns by Roy Meachum.

These began shortly after the inspired Arab violence in the Gaza strip. Unable to comment on them as they appeared, when I had a few moments I prepared and mailed four commentaries addressing some of the propaganda and plain misrepresentations and mistakes in them. These were regarded as too long and were not published.

One of the matters I addressed is selective quotation, Mr. Meachum's use of only some of what appeared in his sources and his disregard of other public sources when they disproved what he wanted to say. One, a learned article by an Arab, identified the two forces responsible for the Arab violence that, whatever one thinks of Israel, it is required to try to end protecting the majority not participating in the violence. One of these forces is the Abu Nidal terrorists Mr. Meachum insists are only patriots. Their patriotism consists in bombing airports at Vienna and Rome, in piracy and the cold-blooded killing of an aged and crippled American Jew and even in assassinating all its members who decided to quit and all the PLO people who wanted to talk to Israelis.

Thus the papers' readers got only Mr. Meachum's preaching of hatred and distortions and misrepresentations. They also were denied any understanding of the background and actualities of the present situation. Without question, the papers have the right to make their own policies. I believe, however, that readers ought not be a captive audience and by policy denied more than Mr. Meachum's inflammatory side of this complicated situation.

On March 9, which by the past will be quite some time before this can appear, Mr. Meachum had another column that is loaded with distortions and misrepresentations, so many it is not possible to even try to address them all. Consistent with his long and undeviating record, they were designed to incite race hatred.

He said that Americans are responsible for the present killings and other great sufferings because "we give arms and money to Israeli hard-liners." Most of the aid was before the Likud coalition (which I happen not to like) and was not to any "hard-liners."

Unless Mr. Meachum regards all Israeli governments as hard-liners.

In fact, when the morning Post gave major attention to the deaths of two Palestinians it gave no attention at all to news that some of the Contras we arm and pay had kidnapped a number of rural civilians, wounded more than a dozen, killed four (which is twice the number of killed Palestinians, but again, they were not killed by Jews) and once again they had kidnapped an American representative of a religious group.

Indeed, at about the same time, the PLO announced that it had intended assassinating Secretary of State Schultz with a massive car bomb that, fortunately, the Israeli police intercepted. This was buried in a news story. It was not the subject of any righteous editorial or columnist's indignation. But again, the PLO is not Jews so it isn't all that bad. The intended victim was, after all, only the American Secretary of State, not an Arab, and he was only there in a futile effort to bring peace to that area.

In Mr. Meachum's version, the cause of the rioting that results in these deaths is no more than an attempt by "Palestinians to deal themselves in." If this means anything at all, it means that the Palestinians sought their own state by these means.

After the end of the first World War Great Britain divided Palestine, having promised homelands to both Jews and Palestinians. A little more than half was placed under the control of King Abdullah and was called "Trans-Jordan." It is the part of the Palestine across the Jordan River. Abdullah started talking to Israelis and was assassinated for it, making Hussein King. Hussein shortened the name to "Jordan."

Egypt's Sadat also was assassinated after he made the only Islamic peace with Israel, another indication that other than Israel, none of the countries in that area really wants peace. All the other Islamic powers are still in a state of war with Israel after 40 years and four defeats.

The truth about "dealing themselves in" is that regularly and often Arabs have refused their own state in the part of Palestine not included in Jordan. They want to wipe Israel out.

Mr. Meachum praises, recommends and takes as his authority a book by a novelist. With this precedent I take as my source not a novelist but an eminent British gentle historian, Paul Johnson: "A History of the Jews." Mr. Meachum has all this outrage because Arabs are killed when their violence is opposed. He

has yet to lament the murder of Jews. Mr. Johnson states that in only the first seven years after Israel was established "over 1,300 Israelis were murdered during Arab raids." Most were infants, small children, women and old men. The rate of Arab murders increased when Islamic powers provided the PLO with more arms and money.

In Historian Meachum's version, "before Dec. 9, 1987 there were only demonstrations, strikes, riots and the like, quickly put down by security forces." He had shed no tears for any Jewish victims of Islamic terrorism, not even for the Islamic victims of it, who greatly outnumber those killed in the wars and current violence. Why are there all these Arab refugees? Because Islam used them to end the state of Israel. Mr. Johnson quotes Egypt radio: "The refugees are the cornerstone in the Arab struggle against Israel. The refugees are the armaments. . ."

Israel has accepted all the Jewish refugees who could get out of Islamic countries but the Islamic states resisted taking the Arab refugees.

There is no space to mention all the many times an independent Palestinian state was rejected by the Arabs — in all instances without any discussion at all. In July 1937, before Israel was created, the British Peel Commission proposed giving the Arabs 80 percent of what remained of Palestine. The Jews agreed but the Arabs turned it down "without discussion."

The UN's 1947 proposal of an independent Arab state of 75 percent of what Arabs didn't already have of Palestine, the Arabs turned down, "without discussion." "Despite . . . Arab unwillingness to negotiate the Israelis attempted, on the basis of the 1949 armistice lines, to get agreement on permanent frontiers. This would have meant the surrender of some territory. . . The Arabs refused direct talks with the Israelis."

This and much more like it is readily available in the last chapter of Historian Johnson's respected work. I learned from this book what I'd not known, that Hitler's is only the most dramatic of holocausts. By a century and a half after the birth of Christ more than 6,000,000 Jews had been murdered or disappeared without trace.

Tears are appropriate for all, not for only some of those who are killed. But they ought not be the "yellow rain" tears of this "Yellow wind" column, reserved for the Arabs who brought it on themselves under the inspiration of the world's greatest terrorists who to Mr. Meachum is not a terrorist but is a "patriot."

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